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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR,  
I/GNEA, B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN  
USAID/ANE/MEA  
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH  
PARIS FOR O'FRIEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR JO](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON MIDDLE EAST

#### Summary

-- Lead stories in all papers today, January 14, highlight Iraq-related developments, including the downing of an American Apache helicopter near Fallujah and continued Iraqi "resistance operations" against coalition forces. Another lead story today highlights developments on Israeli-Palestinian issues, including Prime Minister Sharon's "hint" at the possibility of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza.

#### Editorial Commentary

-- "Israel's call on Syria and the long struggle of will power"

Daily columnist Mohammad Amayreh writes on the op-ed page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (01/14): "It is Damascus' right to view the Israeli prime minister's call on the Syrian President to visit occupied Jerusalem as not serious. It is Damascus' right to question Israel's motives towards the entire peace process in the region. This is because Israel has never taken a serious step in the direction of peace.. Damascus can learn a lesson from Sadat's visit, which has opened the door for settling the issue but could not use it to benefit the Arab nation or Egypt. Damascus can also learn from Palestinian efforts and initiatives to activate negotiations through many concessions that yielded nothing, but burned under Israel's indifference and intransigence.. No doubt Syria has a sincere desire for peace, but that would be just, comprehensive and lasting peace that begins with the withdrawal of the occupation forces, the dismantling of Israeli settlements in the Golan, and then negotiating on other issues such as water and borders."

-- "Education Minister Toukan's plan"

Chief editor Taher Udwan writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (01/14): "Developing the curricula, not changing it. This is what Dr. Khaled Toukan [Jordanian Minister of Education] said. He also said that this development is in its third stage, for which preparations started before the 9/11 attacks in New York, and this means that the issue of changing the curricula has nothing to do with American pressures on countries of the region to change the curricula. Even if these pressures existed on Jordan, this development plan will not be an inside-out change of the cultural or religious concepts in our curricula, not because we are capable of standing up to Washington's pressures, but because our educational system is already and originally based on educational foundations that are free of concepts of extremism and that include concepts of Arab unity and the nation's causes, and this is something no one can force us to change. It is wrong to reject development and to attack the plan on the pretext that combating and resisting American demands for change."

GNEHM